

ORM: Everyone's obligation

By Lt. Col. David Hathaway
77th Fighter Squadron operations officer

In the flying business, as well as many other work areas, the latest buzz is Operational Risk Management. This is a dedicated effort to identify where mission risks exist, look for ways to mitigate them and ultimately decide whether executing the mission is worth the risks involved. I hear people say, "This ORM stuff is all common sense." To some it may be, but the truth is, common sense comes with experience. Without a vast amount of experience to fall back on, what may be common sense to some may not be to others.

Although mismanaging risk in the flying business can cost millions, or even billions, of dollars and possibly lives, accidents can be just as costly in our everyday lives, and so must be a part of our every-day thought process.

As we go through our day, we are faced with a massive amount of decisions. Some are easy to make. These decisions don't take much thought or analysis, because we've probably encountered them before. However, some we haven't. This is where risk management comes into play. Spending a few moments thinking through the potential risks involved help us make an educated decision.



Photo by Dale Eckroth

Currently, the most significant loss of life in the Air Force involves private motor vehicles.

Also, seeking the advice of others may help fill in part of the experience gap. Some of that advice comes in the form of rules, regulations and laws. For example, do you get on a motorcycle without a helmet and drag race another motorcycle? We have laws and regulations prohibiting that kind of behavior, so the answer is no. However, recognizing the risk of a head injury or death alone should tell us it's not worth it. Common sense, even for the least experienced rider, should prevail in this case. OK, now for a less obvious one.

Many of us have been in the situation where we are planning to go on leave and have a long drive ahead of us. We work a full day, and then have eight hours of driving ahead of us before we reach our destination. The excitement to get where we're going tempts us to push straight through. Many of our fellow military members have fallen asleep or gotten distracted as a result of fatigue. They ended up with a wrecked car, and some lost their lives.

In questionable situations like this, we must ask ourselves, "How long have I worked? How rested am I? What are the road conditions?" Then, we need to decide if the risk is worth taking. Of course, since not everyone has years of experience to use a gauge, it's vital to take the advice of those who do.

As leaders, supervisors or even just friends, we all have a duty to help others with risk assessment. Whether it is giving personal advice, getting an intoxicated friend a ride or giving a safety brief before a long weekend, all these help friends and coworkers make an informed and educated decision. Or in the case of alcohol, when they aren't able to manage their own risk, we are obligated to manage it for them.

Risk management is not just for the work place; it applies to everything we do. When common sense isn't so common, hopefully risk analysis will prevent an accident or save a life.

Commander's Connection



Photo by Airman 1st Class Amber McCarthy

In a ceremony Feb. 27, Col. Sam Angelella (right) recognizes the Honorable Joe McElveen, Mayor, City of Sumter, as the 20th Fighter Wing's 2004 honorary commander. Shaw's Honorary Commander Program helps foster a good relationship between the base and community.

"Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at **895-4611** or e-mailed to **commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil**.

Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in **The Shaw Spirit**.

Q

Can something be done about motorists speeding on Frierson Road, especially near the schools?

A

Yes. When a motorist is caught speeding on Frierson Road (or anywhere else on base), 20th Security Forces Squadron members may issue a citation. If an offender receives three citations, they will lose their on-base driving privileges. Offenders, whether military members, contractors or civilians who take their children to/from Shaw Heights or High Hills Elementary Schools, would then need to make alternate transportation arrangements.

The Shaw Spirit

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